



Southeast News

a publication of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Annual Meeting Update

Special Edition '98

A Letter From the Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

More than 250 clergy, delegates, and visitors gathered at Simpsonwood Conference and Retreat Center in Norcross, Georgia, to celebrate the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. Our theme was "Stewards: Called as Partners in God's Service." These were truly three days of blessings. Gentle bursts of grace and joy marked this wonderful gathering. We came together like old friends long parted from one another, with the laughter and stories that mark the coming together of family. We welcomed new friends as we greeted the members of First Immanuel Church in Decatur, Georgia, and Virginia Highlands Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

In our community building time, we marveled at all we had not known about one another, and as the enclosed article points out, we laughed and enjoyed one another's company. Our youth brought us not only the sparkle and vivaciousness of their energy, but a certain wisdom as they named their concerns for today. The Service of Remembrance was a time in which we recalled so many who have gone and become a part of "a cloud of witnesses."

Our keynoter, The Reverend William Green, reminded us that our stewardship must be rooted in joy if it is to blossom, that we cannot tie severed flowers to stalks and expect them to grow. The ever firm but gentle hand of Annie Neal guided us through our business meeting. We sang old favorite hymns. We were moved by stories of faith and courage on Saturday night. Thanks and appreciation were woven throughout, as we acknowledged and lifted up the hands and the hearts which made this wonderful gathering possible.

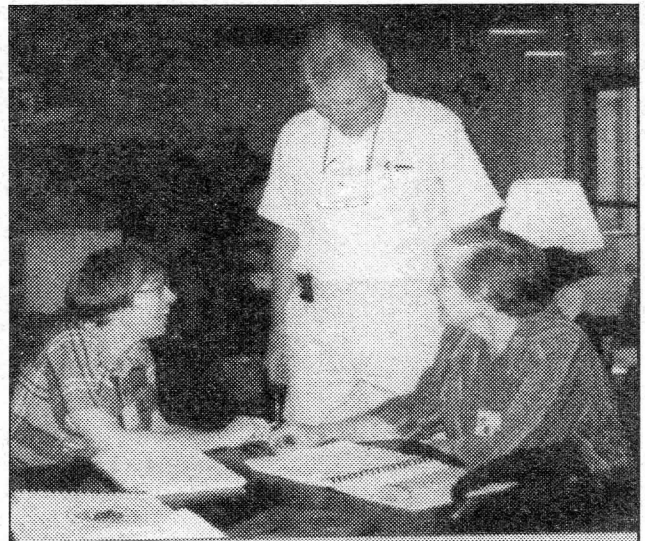
Friends, the Southeast Conference is in a season of great grace, a time of renewal when so many are coming together, pulling up rather than pulling down, celebrating rather than complaining. I would like to express my thanks to all of you who have been a part of this time of building and of new hope.

Peace,

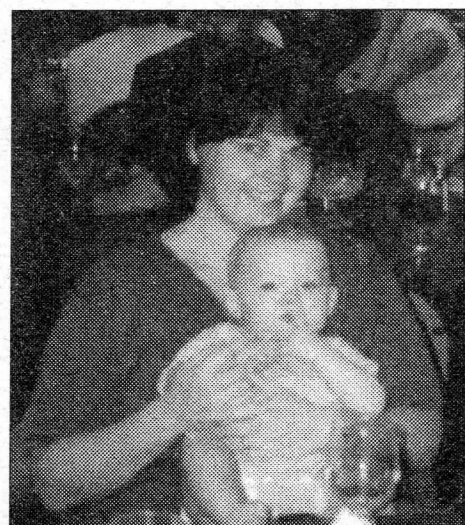
Timothy C. Downs



The Annual Meeting Mass Choir



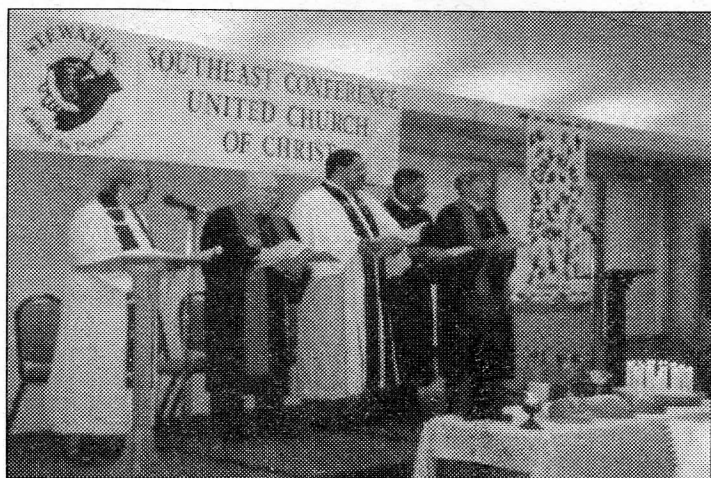
Nancy Sales, Dick & Trudy Braun



Kim Hunt & Isaac Mingus

SUNDAY MORNING AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Sunday morning worship on June 14, opened with a lively South African processional, "We Are Marching in the Light of God." Tim Downs reflected in his meditation on "The Stewardship of Our Tears." We installed our new officers, placing a medallion around the neck of Don Harmon, elected to serve as Moderator of the Southeast Conference, and recognized Steve Parker, elected to serve as Vice Moderator. In addition, we installed new At-Large members to the Board, and one new member on each Commission.



Annette Nielsen, Tim Downs, Larry Calbert, Gary Myers, Jim Smalley

Following the Service of Installation, we celebrated Communion led by Reverend Annette Nielsen, Larry Calbert, and Reverend Tim Downs. The massed choir, directed by Milton Hurst, led us in song and praise, and led us to rejoice more deeply in God's grace, to which the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ is wonderfully transparent.



Budd Friend-Jones, Joyce Hollyday, Elizabeth Clement

UP-DOWNS

Since the phrase "Community Building" appears in my job title, it fell to me to come up with a gathering exercise at the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting. I confess that I am not a big fan of the "If you were a cruciferous vegetable, which cruciferous vegetable would you be?" games that are the usual ice-breaker fare at church conferences. So I turned to Rev. Elizabeth M. Clement for help. She suggested "Up-Downs" (named, of course, for our distinguished Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. Timothy Downs).

As we opened the Annual Meeting on Friday night, Elizabeth and I invited everyone in the crowd who could reply affirmatively to a particular statement to signify so by standing up or waving a hand. We began by recognizing all of those who were attending the Annual Meeting for the first time, a pleasingly large number. Then we had everyone stand who was on their first visit to the Simpsonwood Retreat Center--followed by all those who got lost getting there (too many to count).

We learned how many of us grew up in each of the streams of the United Church of Christ (Evangelical, Reformed, AMA, Christian, and Congregational)--and noted the very large number of us who grew up in other traditions. We acknowledged those who grew up in the South, in each of the other regions of the United States, and in other countries--as well as those who never grew up at all and don't intend to.

When Elizabeth announced, "Stand up if you know where Tim Downs went to high school," a surprising dozen people stood (although, interestingly, Tim Downs was not among them). We learned about our pastimes and our church involvements; recognized our rural, city, and suburban churches; celebrated our multiracial, European-American, African-American, and open-and-affirming congregations.

Our diversity in age became apparent when we invited all those to stand who grew up listening to Frank Sinatra; to the Beatles; the Temptations and the Supremes; the Spice Girls. We had all those stand who were born before television was invented; who had an Etch-a-Sketch as a child; who ever owned a Beanie Baby.

Our mixed feelings about computers appeared when we announced, "Please stand if you understand what 'hard drive' means." This was followed by, "Please stand if you think that 'hard drive' means taking I-85 or I-75 into Atlanta during rush hour." There were those who acknowledged that they can't live without e-mail, and those who admitted they think e-mail is the anti-Christ. Some of us, we learned, insist on rolling the toothpaste tube from the bottom, others squeeze it anywhere, and a few of us don't care and can't imagine who could.

We applauded everything with fervor. Our gathering time was a celebration of the rich diversity among us. If you missed the fun, I invite you to next year's Annual Meeting.

Hope to see you there,

Joyce Hollyday

Conference Associate for Spiritual Development
and Cruciferous Vegetable Games

RESTRUCTURING AT-A-GLANCE

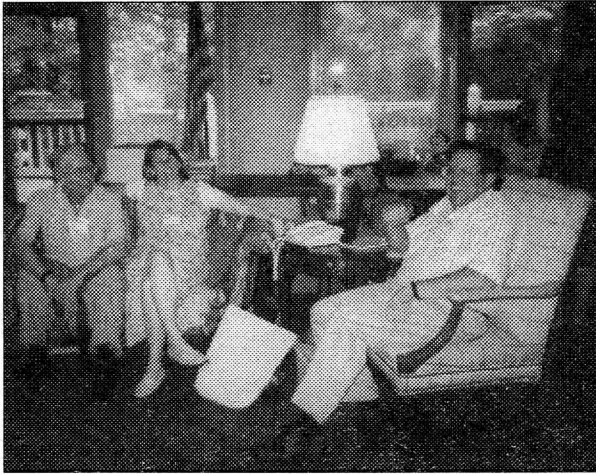
AREA	CURRENT STRUCTURE	NEW STRUCTURE
Instrumentalities	Ten: Recognized: UCBHM, UCBWM, PB, UCF; Established: CCW, OCLL, OCIS, OC, SC, CRI; plus Executive Offices	Four Covenanted Ministries: (OGM, JWM, LCM, WCM); Associated Ministry (UCF); Affiliated Ministry (PB)
Officers	Three: President, Secretary, Director of Finance and Treasurer	Five: General Minister and President, Associate General Minister, Executive Ministers (3)
Planning/Coordination	Council of Instrumentality Executives: (Officers, Executive Associate to President, principal executives of Instrumentalities); advises President and assists President and Executive Council in planning, implementation and coordination	Collegium of Officers (5 Officers): Supports Ministries, leadership for shaping mission programming; implementing GS actions. Mission Planning Council (Officers, principal staff/ leaders of primary subunits of Ministries, others as it deems): mission planning/visioning.
General Synod	Voting delegates include: Conference delegates, elected Officers, members of Executive Council, Moderator and Assistant Moderator.	Voting delegates: Conference delegates, elected Officers, members/ Executive Council, Moderator, Assistant Moderator, GS elected voting members of Boards of JWM, LCM, WCM.
Executive Council	Voting members: 44-46 [33 at-large; 6 Conference Ministers, one from each region; President, Secretary, Director Finance/Treasurer, Moderator, DOC representative]	Voting Members: 58-60 [39 (1 from each) Conference; 1 COREM; 1 each from historically under-represented group (8); 1 each from Board of JWM, LCM, WCM; Officers (5); Moderator; DOC representative]
Boards of Directors	Each Instrumentality has a Board; size varies	Each Covenanted Ministry will be incorporated. JWM, LCM, WCM each have Board of Directors of 55-60 (1 from each Conference; 1 COREM; 1 from each historically under-represented group; 3 at-large; 2 CCM; its Executive Minister; GMP; 1 Seminary of UCC). OGM has a smaller Board, a subsidiary corporation of the Executive Council. EC is the voting membership of OGM corporation

GLOSSARY:

Existing structure: UCBHM=Board for Homeland Ministries; UCBWM=Board for World Ministries; PB=Pension Boards; UCF=United Church Foundation; CCW=Coordinating Center for Women; OCLL=Office for Church Life and Leadership; OCIS=Office for Church in Society; OC=Office of Communication; SC=Stewardship Council; CRI=Commission for Racial Justice; COREM=Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries; CCM=Council of Conference Ministers; DOC=Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); EC=Executive Council; GS=General Synod

New structure: OGM=Office of General Ministries; JWM=Justice and Witness Ministries; LCM=Local Church Ministries; WCM=Wider Church Ministries; GMP=General Minister and President;

Saturday Afternoon Workshops a Great Success



Dick Sales, Joyce Hollyday, John Mingus

At this Annual Meeting, we conducted Workshops on Saturday afternoon in two sessions. Those who led the workshops reported a wonderful level of enthusiasm, a deep hunger for information about the UCC, and about ways to strengthen our local congregations through stewardship, financial planning, and faithful action.

A tremendous amount of interest was expressed in the workshop "Renew Your Church," led by John Mingus as he introduced the Covenant for Renewal and invited congregations to be a part of this.

Dick Sales took this occasion to introduce the theological education extension program, Theology Among the People, "TAP," and Joyce Hollyday led a stewardship-oriented workshop reflecting on the "Widows' Mite." National staff introduced us to planned and special giving, the Cornerstone Fund, an overview of stewardship. We had an opportunity to share concerns and celebration about the work of the United Church Board for World Ministries, and the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

Bob Goodyear shared the experience of Pilgrimage United Church of Christ in Marietta, GA, as they moved toward becoming an Open and Affirming Congregation. Henry Hobson introduced us to using the new confirmation materials as a way to provide an overview of the United Church of Christ, not only for confirmands, but for adult members as well.

We are deeply grateful for the time and commitment of each of the workshop leaders, and all of those who sought to be a part of these events.

Youth of the Conference Make Their Presence Felt

It was with deep joy that we welcomed more than 15 young people as a part of our Conference Annual Meeting. They assisted us with worship leadership, spoke at our "Speak Outs" session, conducted hearings on concerns that they feel deeply, and took time to share those concerns with us.

Their concerns included: noting the troubling rise in teenage suicides, in teenage pregnancy, the rise of violence throughout our society and specifically, among teenagers. These and many other concerns that were named will be brought to the attention of the Commissions for Christian Education and Youth, and Christian Social Justice.

We are grateful to the adult leadership who led so effectively, Kristi Denham, Marva Grayson, Amy Cantrell, and Chrystal Cook.

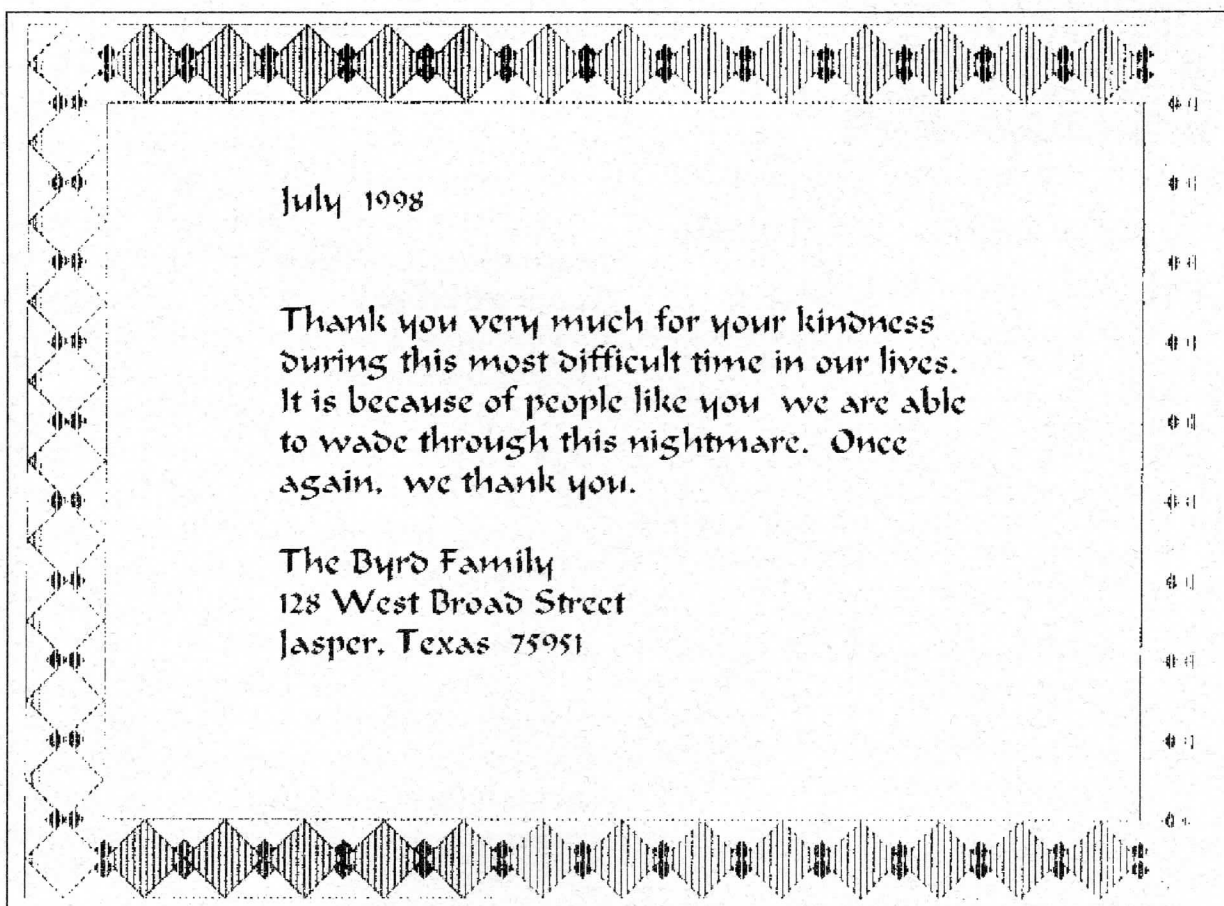
Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference Votes on the Reorganization of the United Church of Christ

At the Friday night hearing concerning the reorganization of the United Church of Christ, a thoughtful conversation was held concerning the implications of this reorganization for us at a Conference level and for the local congregations of the United Church of Christ. When the matter of the reorganization came to the floor, Dr. Annie Neal spent considerable time walking us through an overview of the reorganization, and a conversation about the implications of this reorganization for us.

We have attached to this newsletter a chart entitled, "Restructuring at a Glance," and we hope it will be useful to you in understanding what lies ahead for us at a national level. The vote to approve the amendments to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ passed by an overwhelming margin. We hope you will take time to read the materials that were included in the Yearbook of the Conference, and to feel free to ask us any questions about the implications of this for us.



Sam & Reka Kaetzal, Annie & Ed Neal



Received in the Conference Office

PASTORAL CONCERNS

remember in our prayers:

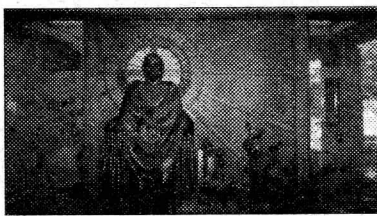
Dan Garrett, interim minister at Oak Grove Congregational Christian Church, Pine Mountain, Georgia on the occasion of the recent death of his father.

The family of Reverend Wesley Martin, of Atlanta, Georgia, retired minister who died in June, 1998.

Reverend Bennie Liggins, pastor at Community Congregational Church, Montgomery, Alabama, as he awaits test results.

The family of Idella Childs, a stalwart of 1st Congregational Church in Marion, AL. Mrs. Childs, the mother of the late Jean Childs Young, died on Saturday August 8, funeral services were held Wednesday August 12.

Conference website - www.secucc.org



Commission on Christian Social Justice Drafts Letter on Behalf of the Annual Meeting

We were reminded by Ted Braun, Chair of the Conference Commission on Social Justice, that the recent death of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas, was yet another reminder of the prevasiveness and horror of racism in our country.

Under Ted's leadership, the Commission drafted a letter to be sent to our sisters and brothers in Christ in the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ, and to the family of James Byrd, Jr. This is the text of the letter; which received a resounding ovation at the Annual Meeting:

We members of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ, gathered for the Annual Meeting of our Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, June 12-14, 1998, would like to make the following statement as an expression of our faith and the call we have received to be Jesus' disciples:

We are appalled by the torture and murder of James Byrd, Jr., in Jasper, Texas, this past week. Mr. Byrd, walking home from a family gathering, was offered a ride by three white men who then beat him, chained him to their pickup truck, and dragged him for several miles, causing his dismemberment and death.

That a child of God and brother of ours should be so penalized, degraded, and killed because of the wonderful diversity that God has given the human family is abhorrent to us and a blasphemy, we believe, against God and God's creation.

We express our deep sympathy and sorrow to the Byrd family and pray that this tragedy will move us all to address with new urgency the racism that underlies our society, and our need to hear God's call to care for each other with tenderness, respect and love.



1997-1998 Board of Directors, SEC

Amenities & Appreciation

There are a number of ingredients that go into making an effective and successful annual meeting -- an experience that is inspiring, renewing and celebrative, informative, inclusive, and creative. The Annual Meeting this year had all of these ingredients, and we express our great appreciation to all who had a part in it.

We are especially grateful to:

Marta Morrison, Beth Loyless, Mary Brueggemann, Kristi Denham, James Loyless, and Kim Ward for their excellent work in preparing for this meeting. Their imaginative planning, their thoroughness and attention to many large and small details made for a smooth-running and deeply satisfying meeting.

The Simpsonwood staff for their attention to our comfort, for the delicious meals, and for the numerous refreshment stations offering a variety of beverages, cookies, and fruits.

Gerri Ryons-Hudson and all the others in the Conference office who prepared the invaluable Conference booklet and directory--a resource that provided comprehensive and accessible information for us.

Joyce Hollyday and Elizabeth Clement for their community-building leadership in two opening sessions, Milton Hurst for the wonderful Saturday evening of testimonials and special music and Sunday morning anthem, Tim Morrison whose drumming gave our singing a new beat, and Annie Neal who graced our meeting as moderator, leading us efficiently through the agenda and giving the meeting a joyful and congenial persona.

William Green for his keynote address on joy as the foundation of stewardship, Timothy Downs for his Sunday morning sermon on the stewardship of tears, the workshop leaders (Barbara Everett, John Gill, Robert Goodyear, William Green, Henry Hobson, Joyce Hollyday, Marie Loutoo, Cheri Lovell, John Mingus, Tim Morrison, and Richard Sales) for sharing vital information and resources, the Commissions, programs and agencies that provided helpful information in hearings, displays and exhibits, and the Presbyterian Book Store for providing an excellent variety of books for sale.

Our Conference Minister, Timothy Downs, and the three Conference Associates, Joyce Hollyday, John Mingus, and Richard Sales, for their dedicated ministries on our behalf. They are Spirit-filled servant leaders and we deeply appreciate them.

The ecumenical visitors who attended our meeting, noting appreciatively the presence of Tim Shirley, pastor of the Virginia-Highland Baptist Church in Atlanta and a representative of the Baptist Alliance with whom our Conference is developing closer ecumenical ties.

The church delegates and visitors--the congregation of God's people of the Southeast Conference gathered at this time and place--representing a precious treasure on behalf of the life and mission of the church.

God's Spirit which we felt filling this place and moving in our midst.

Submitted by Ted Braun

KYP

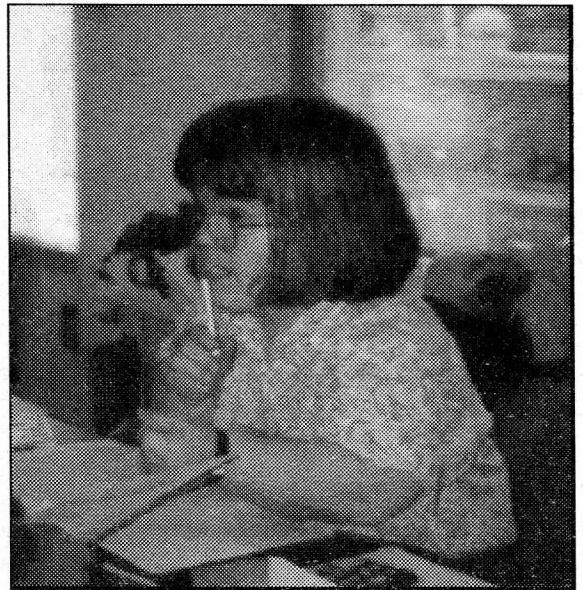
The UCC Office of Communication is still fighting the good fight as an advocate for the public's rights in broadcasting. Arguments filed by the office heavily influenced a recent Federal Communications Commission decision to keep rules requiring broadcasters to air responses on personal attacks and political editorials. Since the 1980s, the industry has been trying to jettison the regs, while OC has argued that such rules foster robust and fair debate on important issues.

Could that be a "Sunday Morning Special," a concealed pistol, in the parson's cassock? If the parson is in a church in Kentucky, it just might be. A law signed by the governor on Good Friday allowing clergy to be armed in church went into effect this July. But mainstream pastors, led by UCC minister the Rev. Nancy Jo Kemper, are alarmed at the thought of clergy packing heat inside a house of worship. Kemper, who is executive director of the Kentucky Council of Churches, recently appeared on "The Today Show." "For hundreds of years, the church has been a sanctuary away from the horrors of the rest of society, a place where weapons were not allowed," she told viewers.

Fifty years ago, the United Nations offered the world a monumental document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the sessions, and seated right behind her was the Rev. Howard Schomer, representing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a predecessor body of the United Church Board for World Ministries. The UCC, of course, didn't come into existence until 1957, but at its Second General Synod, in 1959, delegates called for the full implementation of the U.N. accords.

Something new has been added to the UCC's home page on (<http://www.ucc.org>). "NewsBytes" offers headline news of the UCC to busy 'net surfers.' Many of the stories also have links to more complete stories or background information. NewsBytes is a mixture of hard news and features and is published online weekly.

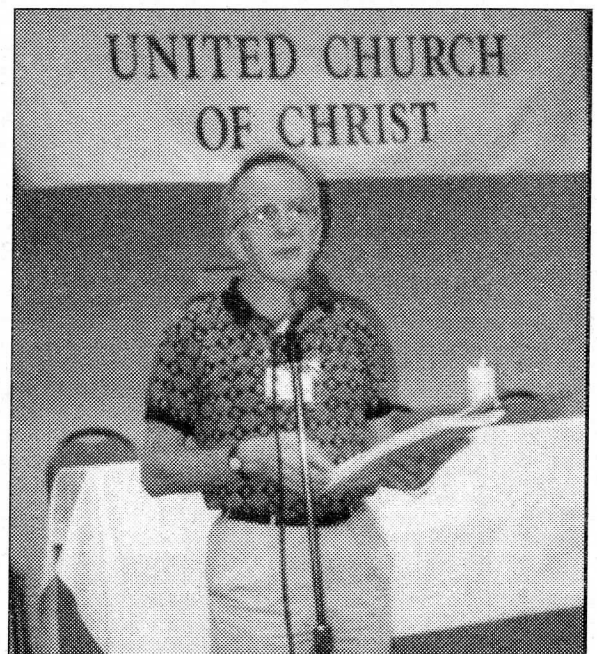
Conference Office: 800/807 1993



Annual Meeting Registrar "Beth Loyless"



"Cheri Lovell" of the Cornerstone Fund



Friday Night Worship Leader "Budd Friend-Jones"

The Conference Calendar

AUGUST

01

GA/SC Church & Ministry Committee
Atlanta, GA

15

ALA/TN - EAL/WGA Executive Committees
Lanett, AL

21 - 22

Board of Directors Orientation & Retreat
Atlanta, GA

25

Disciples of Christ & Atlanta UCC Clergy Meeting
Atlanta, GA

26

Crisis Response Team Training
Chattanooga, TN

SEPTEMBER

01

Nominations for Recognition Awards
for GA/SC Annual Meeting-Deadline

11-13

GA/SC Annual Meeting - Evergreen Cong'l.
Thomasville (Beachton), GA

18-19

ALA/TN Annual Meeting - Pilgrim Cong'l.
Chattanooga, TN

23-24

Pre-Retirement Seminar
Chattanooga, TN

Southwest Conference
of the
United Church of Christ
756 W. Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30308

